

Existing Bee Laws - Chapter 131 of the Texas Agriculture Code - last updated in 1983

The existing laws governing bees and honey are available at "<http://txbeeinspection.tamu.edu/regulations/>." You are encouraged to read Chapter 131 in its entirety to know your exact duty as a beekeeper under the existing law.

Below is a summary, and not the full or exact law, of the important definitions and provisions currently affecting beekeepers. **These laws will remain in force, unaltered, if the proposed amendments to Chapter 131 of the Agriculture Code contained in HB 1293 are not enacted.**

1. *"Disease" means American Foulbrood, European Foulbrood, any other disease of honeybees, or parasites or pests that affect bees or brood. All beekeepers have a duty to report these "diseases" to the Chief Apiary Inspector under penalty of Class C Misdemeanor.*
2. *The Chief Apiary Inspector may determine that the public welfare requires the establishment of a quarantine, either protective or restrictive, and prohibit the movement of bees, equipment, pollen, or honey.*
3. *A person may not sell or offer for sale a queen bee and attendant bees, package bees, nuclei, or queen cells in Texas unless the bees are accompanied by a certificate from the Chief Apiary Inspector stating that the apiary is free of disease, or an affidavit made by the beekeeper that the bees are not diseased.*
4. *The Chief Apiary Inspector may seize and order the destruction, treatment, or sale of a colony of bees, equipment, pollen, or honey that is determined to be diseased or infectious, or in violation of a quarantine.*
5. *A permit is required to ship bees into or out of Texas. Each permit has its own fee requirements, and a permit is required with each individual shipment. A permit is also required to ship bees across county lines within Texas. One permit serves for all movements of bees between the counties listed on the permit.*
6. *The Chief Apiary Inspector may provide for registration of all apiaries (those with six or more hives) in the state.*
7. *A person may not operate an apiary unless the equipment is clearly marked with the name and address of the beekeeper, or identified by branding or pressing the wood with a brand number or name assigned by the Chief Apiary Inspector.*
8. *The Chief Apiary Inspector may enter at a reasonable hour any public or private premises, including a building, depot, express office, storeroom, vehicle, or warehouse in which bees, equipment, pollen, or honey may be located to determine whether a violation has occurred or is occurring.*
9. *All violations of Chapter 131 regarding bees are Class C misdemeanors, punishable by up to a \$500 fine. All violations of Chapter 131 regarding the labeling and sale of honey are a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to 180 days in jail and/or a fine up to \$2000. The laws regarding the labeling and sale of honey are administered and enforced by the Texas Department of State Health Services.*

If you have a question regarding the existing laws and regulations contact Mark Dykes, the Chief Apiary Inspector, at "mdykes@tamu.edu".

The Texas Beekeepers Association and local beekeepers are working to update these laws in the 2017 Texas legislative session with HB 1293. You can find out more at <http://texasbeekeepers.org/blog/>.